

# The Rusted Boar

By Nevi Alden, and Xeno Baba



## Forword:

The Rusted Boar is an interstellar ship with a small bar and guest cabins installed onboard. She travels between systems, habitable planets, outposts, and other places humans lie deep within the arms of our mother galaxy, toting a variety of clients. With her, she brings a unique atmosphere, pleasant music, drinks from all around the galaxy, and a professional staff. Welcome patron. Enjoy your stay. Please leave your shoes at the door.

The stories here are altered versions of true events in many ways, taking real life problems, from real life friends, family, and strangers, and fitting them into the setting of The Rusted Boar. No two patrons are the same person. Put yourself into the shoes of the patron, and enjoy the trip.

# Prologue: The Rusted Boar

You step under the imposing rust colored ship and out of the rain. You aren't sure if you should go inside in all honesty, but it does have a sign bolted above the hatch reading "The Rusted Boar. Visitors welcome."

You walk up the stairs nervously. You aren't sure what to expect, but you wouldn't expect anything that good. You've heard of the place before. It's an interstellar bar ship, so it must be seedy as hell right? As you reach the airlock, it opens with a hiss. You step into the hall and find yourself pleasantly surprised. Lights hung to the ceiling of the hall glow with a gentle, breathing radiance. It's not dirty or rundown as the exterior would have you believe. In fact the floor of the corridor is well polished hardwood. This surprises you greatly, not many people would spend the money to add such comfort to a space faring vessel. You look down the hall to a large wooden door set into the metal. It stands out amongst the steel walls and automated doors. The careful breathing of the lights gives it a slight, almost living glow. You feel a bit of your apprehension dissolve as make your way to the dark, oak door.

Upon pushing open the heavy portal your senses are tickled with various smells and sounds. Light music plays over a very high quality comms system, and sounds of whispering chatter. The smell of freshly made stew suffuses the area, along with undertones of wood, beer and something like a forest. The ceiling immediately catches your eye in a sea of green plants. You aren't sure what exactly they are, but they must be the source of that elusive scent. That same living glow from the hallway compliments their presence nicely. You look around, soaking in the atmosphere. The tables and furniture are all made out of similar woods and linens, dark browns and tans. The walls still show some signs of an interstellar ship. Blinking lights and information panels with readouts glow in various places throughout the bar, yet they don't intrude upon the atmosphere of the place. You've never seen anything like it. It's something special. As you're about to walk into the room you hear the voice of a young woman call out to you. It's the bartender.

"Welcome to the Rusted Boar Sir, best bar this side of the galaxy. If you wouldn't mind please leave your shoes at the door?"

Dumbfounded, you do so without question, placing your shoes in a labeled cabinet near the door. Just taking off your shoes makes you feel relaxed and at home in this strange little bar. You smile to yourself without even realizing it.

You look to the sharply dressed bartender. Her wavy hair cascades behind her shoulders, and her glasses frame her sharp face nicely. She looks at you with the care of a practiced professional.. Even she adds to the comfort of this place.

She smiles at you warmly “Please, have a seat sir. What should I call you?” Her voice is soft, and warm, filled with care.

You reply without much thought, still dumbstruck by the haven you have encountered. “Uh, York. Miss...” You trail off.

“You may call me Nevi, Mr. York, it’s a pleasure to meet you. So what can I get you tonight Sir? A drink? Something to warm you up maybe? Or maybe a bite to eat? Our cook decided to whip up a nice stew today since it was going to rain.”

You smile in spite of yourself yet again, take a seat, and order.

# Book 1. A quiet night

It's quiet today; you can't even hear the mining drones from in the bar. The music is gone, the chatter of the patrons having died out as they return to the daily grind of extracting and refining ore deeper within the industrial sector of the outpost. The silence buzzes in your ears while you clumsily sip your drink and take in the acute details of the oak bar you've been staring blankly at. You're too drunk and despondent to look at much else.

Finally tired of examining the wood grain, you adjust yourself, pulling on the hem of your coveralls. Scratching at your stubble, you briefly consider what a mess you must look like right now, but what does that matter to anyone at this point? You tuck your head into your arms and blurt out the first thing that pops into your mind.

"I'm such a fuck-up". You slur your words, barely aware of what you're saying. A young woman's voice cuts through the fog in response.

"Aren't we all in some way?"

You try to lift your head and focus your vision on the bartender. Failing that, you prop your chin on your hand and blearily gaze in her direction. Her face carries a grim smirk, framed by her ashy blonde hair, a pair of thin, rectangular reading glasses and quite a cute mole under her lip. You catch a glimpse of the badge on her collar. Emi, it mutely blinks back at you in the blue holographic sheen of the ship's emblem.

You snort dismissively as you eye her. "I've gotta be way up there on the biggest fuck-ups list, then. I can barely wrap my head around it," you grumble. The woman nods soundlessly, still intently polishing various odds and ends behind the bar. Passive yet present, she seems like a good listener.

You raise your head from the warm comfort of your palm, rising frustration churning hotly with the alcohol in your gut.. "It's not even the breakup I'm most upset about. I knew it was coming. It was everything leading up to it." You feel yourself begin to boil over, your voice shaking. "Every stupid thing I said and did! Everything I didn't do! She deserved better for all that time spent with me." You punctuate this last statement by loudly slumping back down onto your bar-stool. You hadn't realized you were standing. "She deserved better," you sulk.

The gentle singing of a bell fills the empty bar. Last call, it seems. Emi gives you a conciliatory smile, folding and unfolding her bar towel in her hands. “Maybe it’s about time you headed back to your quarters. It seems like you need some time and rest to sort through this all.”

Emilia speaks to you blandly, as if what she’s saying is a known law of the universe, “It can’t be entirely your fault that things didn’t work out. Life is unpredictable man. Breakups happen. Hell, sometimes it’s for the best. Nobody can be blamed for that.”

You sink further into your chair and stare up at the ceiling, briefly admiring the collection of hanging plants that lent a fresh and living atmosphere to the room. You take a deep breath.

“Yeah, I probably do. Hell, maybe some people are better off being alone.”

You watch as the woman stops and stares solemnly into the mug she’s holding. Her mind seems to drift for a time, carried off into space by the rumble of the ship’s systems. She murmurs something to herself that you barely catch.

“... Maybe sometimes. That doesn’t mean you’ll always have to be.”

You lean back in your chair and stare up at the ceiling, briefly admiring the collection of hanging plants that lent a fresh and living atmosphere to the room. You take a deep breath.

“Yeah, I probably do. Hell, maybe some people are better off being alone.”

You watch as the woman stops and stares solemnly into the mug she’s holding. Her mind seems to drift for a time, carried by the barely audible rumble of the ship’s systems. She murmurs something to herself that you barely catch.

“Sssorry?” You barely slur out.

“What was that Miss Emilia?” You barely slur out.

She snaps to attention, looking up from her hands to you. She gives that same sad smile again.

“Nothing. Have a nice night.” She waves you off as you stumble through the door, feeling somehow hopeful for the future.

## Book 2. A lost patron

You look down at your gin and tonic, then back up at the bartender. The smell of ferns, fresh rain, lime and herbs tickle your nose. Excepting the sound of running water, and a light rumble from the engines of the ship, the bar is silent, and empty.

You sigh dejectedly and take another large swallow of the gin and tonic. It burns on the way down, but the warmth spreads through your stomach and blossoms into your arms. It feels horrible.

The bartender looks with concern over her circular glasses. “Pace yourself there ma’am. That’s a double.”

“Fuck you.” You barely keep yourself from slurring as you spit the words out at her. She sighs and walks to the end of the bar. You watch her, regret stirring in your breast. You’re only half a drink in, but already you feel fuzzy. You let your head drop onto the counter.

How did you get here? How did it end like this? One fucking mis- Your train of thought is cut by the sound of a glass being set on the bar. Lifting your head up, you see a cloudy glass of something next to your almost finished drink.

“W-What’s this?” this time you do slur a bit and feel a blush creeping to your face in embarrassment.

“It helps prevent hangovers. No offense, ma’am, but you clearly can’t handle your liquor, and as the bartender, and captain, it’s my job to keep you safe.” She gives you a small smile, the concern in her eyes palpable. Before you know it, tears are running down your face. You babble a bit, trying to string some words together, but it’s all nonsense.

The bartender pats your head gently. “Hey now darling, breath, I can’t understand a damn thing you’re saying.”

You chuckle, and choke for a second, stuttering. “I-I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” You take a few breaths and sip the drink she gave you. It tastes like thick yet watered down grape juice. You can feel it washing away the burn in your stomach.

“So what’s got ya so down, uhh?” She leans over on the bar, waiting for your reply.

You sigh and take another sip of the mixture, pushing the gin & tonic away. “Jali, and, I lost my job.”

“Well theres always next time, right Jali?”

Despite the reassuring voice, the words ring in your ear like a bad tune. Your voice wavers through clenched teeth as you begin to articulate the rage swirling around in your head.

“No, there’s not. There is no next time! I spent my entire adult life, 12 years, working 50 *fucking* hours a week or more! I made my way up the chain and eventually started managing this stupid fucking company, for these stupid fucking executives! And all of it was swiped away in an instant! The only damn thing I’ve ever cared about! I’ve lost everything to that fucking cur!”

By now tears are streaming down your face again, and you slam your fist on the bar.

“... everything. Now I’m 30 years old, with no chance at love, no job, no home, and I’m driveling away at a bar, drinking for the first time in my life because I don’t know what else to fucking do.”

The woman glances with feigned alarm at where you brought your fist down against the bar. “Easy now, Miss, don’t take it out on the ol’ boar. She didn’t hurt you did she?” She chuckles lightly at her own remark, and in spite of everything you smile a tad, choking down ragged breaths and wiping away your tears.

“Yeah, sorry. It’s just, it’s not fair, you know? It was a simple mistake, the first one in my *entire* career. I never thought something like that could end it all. I always thought I had at least a *little* wiggle room. But Venturion thought otherwise.” You sniffle and let your head drop to the bar again.

The bartender refills your glass with water this time and speaks suddenly. “Y’know, I used to be a trader, and back then I was the first officer of the ol’ Boar here.” She pats the bar affectionately.

“Really?” you respond ambivalently, not exactly sure where this is going.

“Yeah, we did runs between Centuri IV and Sol. You might not know it, but



those were some of the most dangerous trading routes that existed back then, before the federation locked them down good and tight. And thing is, in that line of work making mistakes kills people.” You stay quiet, feeling a lump forming in your throat.

You see a glimmer in the bartender's eye, “We were the best of the best. Professional, fast, and damn good against any old pirate that'd come at us. The ol' Boar was outfitted for a damn war.”

She pauses for a moment, taking time to form her words. You aren't sure, but you think her lip quivers slightly as she continues. “We thought we could take on anything back then. We had fought off about 5 separate ships trying to take our cargo, so even our Captain was getting a little over confident. Shoulda realized by then. Hell, shoulda realized when that that stuck up fucker refused to tell us what was in the crate.

“We got so close too. 4 lightyears from Centuri. That's where our luck ran out. Our power shut down. All at once, computers, navigation, engines, all except the life support was down. Nobody knew what the hell was going on. The EO couldn't tell what caused it. She worked as fast as she could, but by the time she got the power back up, it was too late.”

You lift your head and look her in the eye. You don't see her smiling this time. “We'd already been boarded. First time in our entire career in fact. Nobody, and I mean nobody could penetrate our defenses before this. But there they were, pirates, cold, hard, and experienced. We fought well enough, you might even say valiently. We took down those bastards with a prejudice, and we even got away with our cargo. But not without a price. Our Captain.”

She pauses, looking away. You see a small, almost crystalline tear, roll down her chin.

“I-I'm sorry,” you offer meekly.

She looks back smiling sadly, all traces of the tear gone. “After all that I couldn't bring myself to put my new ship and crew in deliberate danger like that. Catherine always wanted to own a bar anyhow.” She offers you another beautifully bitter smile. “So I converted the Boar and we've been making passenger runs in Imperial and Federation space ever since.” You stay silent for a while, unsure how to respond.

She continues as you stare at your glass. “We all make mistakes Jali, and sometimes the consequences are fucked. But that's OK. We still have the

present, and we still have the future, right?”

You look up at the Captain and somehow, you feel a little better.

### Book 3. A fight to be had

You look up from your drink, hearing the bartender say something. You don't quite make it out.

"You say something Captain?"

She smiles at you and shakes her head. "Not to you Sir, just dealing with some minor issues aboard the ship." You give her a worried look, you aren't sure what she meant by that, but you're pretty sure it doesn't mean anything good.

"Everything alright?" Your voice wavers slightly, a clear concern emanates from you.

"Yes Miss MacHoshi, really, nothing my crew can't handle. But you had a story you were telling didn't you? Please go on." She gives you a confident smile and you feel most of your concern melt away.

"Well, yeah, here I am you know? What has my life come to? Things used to be different, I used to enjoy my work, my life. I used to be confident and fulfilled. Now what have I got? Nothing... I know, I know... It's selfish of me. Many in destitution would literally kill for my position, but it's just... It's *really* not what it's all cracked up to be. There's no more challenge anymore. Just paperwork and tedium." You stop as you hear the bartender speak again.

"Yeah you know the drill, just take em out while Emi charges up the drive. Yeah, keep em busy, if you have to, have LT Kersten fly out a fighter, though I'd rather he not. Mhm. Ok I gotta get back to my patrons, yeah keep me up to date." She looks back to you. "Sorry Ma'am, please continue."

"Wait, are we, in a battle?" You're honestly baffled, and feel a shudder of sudden panic rush through you. You haven't felt so much as a shudder from the ship around you, but from what the Captain just said the Boar must be fighting someone out there.

"Yep, nothing to worry about though. Just the usual ill equipped pirates." She begins to shine a glass and beckons you to continue your story. "Come on miss, you were telling me about the money right?"

"Y-yeah..." You decide to go with it at this point. She's just too damned

confident to not believe at this point, and if you're honest you are a little drunk, so fuck it.

"Well, I built up my brand from scratch right? Things were good, challenging. I had plenty of work to do and it was stressful but rewarding. Eventually though we just got so damn big, I started hiring people to delegate to. At some point I just, didn't need to do field work anymore. At first it was fun, like a never ending vacation... With some paper work and management here and there. But now? I don't know, things just, monotonous. I don't do anything but laze around all day or sign papers.

You find yourself speaking more passionately now, more anger poured into each syllable. "I made my company what it is today, and I'm proud of that y'know? But at the same time, my life is just... Nothing happens, and I think I hate that. At the same time I feel so guilty about it, anyone would kill to have what I have!" You end the tirade with a good solid fist on the table.

She cackles. She honest to goodness cackles at this, and for a moment it stabs you in the chest. You just poured your heart out to this stranger, and she's laughing at you! "Sorry ma'am sorry, It's just funny sometimes. You really don't see it do you?" She wipes a tear away as she looks at you with mirth on her face.

"What?!" You yell at her, tears running down your eyes as you give her your best glare.

"Ma'am, you just want something in your life that can give you purpose right? Find something! Just like I found purpose in bartending, you can find purpose everywhere. You have all this wealth, but you don't know what to do with it. Maybe you're thinking about this the wrong way right? Maybe you can put that money to good use, start a new company, or put it towards research right? Get out on the field, do some good work. You have the means, you just need to figure out what it is you want to do with it, instead of using it to indulge." She puts the glass down and puts a hand to her ear. "Yeah ok, thanks Layvee, I'll have a glass ready when you come down."

"That's too simple." You laugh aloud. "That's too damn simple!" It really is kind of stupid. You've been spending all this time complaining about not having anything to do. When all you had to do, was *something*, anything, really.

“So shall I get you anything else Miss MacHoshi?” The bartender motions to a tap labeled "Water."

“No no, I think I’m done for the night. I’ll head back to my room. Here, a tip. Thanks Miss Nevi.” You hand over an unmarked credit chip.

“Well thank you very much ma’am, You have a fine night alright?” You smile and nod to her. As you walk out you see a broad young man in a red jumpsuit walk past. Just as he does you hear a small squeal from behind the bar. You laugh to yourself lightly. Knowing those credits will go to good use.

## Book 5. The Assistant Cook

You shift your legs around uncomfortably as you sit on the cold, hard floor of the cargo bay. In the cramped darkness, a single fluorescent-blue light blinks in and out erratically above you, bouncing off the dull steel walls in ways that make you think they're slowly closing in on you. You shut your eyes and try to relax. That's the entire reason you came here; you needed to get away from the midday bustle of the Boar. This little hideaway provides a sanctuary where that crazy bitch of a head cook wasn't there to breathe down your neck. Compared to the confines and conditions of the kitchen you worked in, the cargo bay was downright homey.

You snap out of your meditation as you hear the hatch on the other side of the room slide open. From where you're sitting, the entrance is obscured by a small maze of shelving units thickly stacked with assorted crates of supplies. If you stay still, you shouldn't be noticed, but you can't see who's there unless they round the corner. Your heart pounds, had the Chef found your sanctuary? That's not the noise a hatch makes when someone is rushing through it on their way from one room to another. You panic, there was a quiet deliberacy about it, whoever was here, was here for a reason.

Your suspicions are confirmed as a familiar face slowly peeks out from behind the shelving unit. You see long, maple hair neatly framing a set of soft features which you recognize as belonging to one of the officers of this ship. You breath a sigh of relief, it's the Commander. She outranks you, but she's also not *actually* insane like the Chef.

"Hey Emi" you call out in a casual tone. The words feel strange as they come out of your mouth. While she is your superior, you'd like to consider her a friend, so you ought to at least be able to comfortably use that name.

She doesn't respond. Rather, she approaches slowly from her hiding place, stopping to look over her shoulder in an almost comically paranoid fashion, then finally takes a seat on the floor across from you, resting her back against one of the larger crates. Once comfortably seated, and having adequately assured herself she wasn't followed, she shuts her eyes, leans her head back, and takes a deep breath.

"This is probably the most out-of-the-way spot on this ship," she sighs, "but that doesn't make it any easier to get away from the Captain. She's been

watching me like a hawk lately.” She straightens up a little bit against the crate and reaches her arm out, motioning towards you with the outstretched palm of her hand. You take the cue and dig into the chest pocket of your jumpsuit, procuring a small, clear plastic pouch. Inside the pouch are a number of tiny white cubes, like lumps of sugar. You toss it her way and she gracefully snatches it out of the air.

“Nice,” she quietly remarks to herself. She opens the pouch up and pours a few of the cubes out into her cupped hand, then zips it up and tosses it back. You fumble the catch, and the pouch slaps lightly against your chest. You pick it up off your lap, pour out some of the contents for yourself, and slide the near-empty bag into your pocket. You look back up to your guest and lock eyes with her. After a moment of understanding between the two of you, you each pop one of the cubes into your mouth and start chewing.

The cube has the consistency of chewing gum, with a cool, syrupy flavor of artificial grapes and strong alcohol that quickly spreads through your mouth and numbs your tongue. The dizzying gas that hits you shortly after you start chewing has knocked you to the floor more than once. As you inhale it, the cool, numbing sensation spreads through your chest. It’s expensive stuff for what it does, like huffing markers for aristocrats.

“Why do they call it Bacchew?” Emi asks, tilting her head and making a weird, somewhat lopsided face, the mole under her lip quivering, as she breathes in the fumes. “I get the ‘chew’ part, at least.”

“Named after Bacchus, Roman god of wine or something,” you mumble, somewhat dazed yourself by the choking aroma.

“That’s stupid. The name is pronounced ‘back-us,’ and this stuff isn’t even that much like wine. They just called it that cause they thought it was a good pun on paper.”

“Well, it stuck. Who else but you would know any better, anyway?” you retort with a smirk. She sits there, thinking for a moment, and tilts her head down towards the floor.

“... I assume you want to talk?” she finally says after half a minute or so of silence and chewing.

You perk up, and look over to see her staring at you somewhat seriously. You shrug in response and toss another piece into your mouth. It doesn’t kick as

hard the second time around, or any time after. A lot of things in your life don't.

"I guess I was looking for advice," you mumble.

She grins and lets out a sigh, perhaps what would have been a chuckle had she the energy to laugh. "If you wanted decent advice, you shouldn't have gotten me high."

"It's a philosophical dilemma. Getting people high turns them into, like, philosophers right?" you chuckle loosely at your own joke.

"Mmm. Maybe so," she mumbles. "So, what's got you feeling all philosophical, then?"

You sit in silence for another few moments contemplating what combination of words would best convey what's been on your mind, and finally settle on the following:

"Do you think some people are incapable of loving another person?"

Even in her languid stupor, the question seems to catch her off guard. Her chin stops bobbing up and down. She glances at you, then the floor, then the ceiling, then back at you. She's thinking.

"Not necessarily," she finally replies, and slouches hard against her crate as if getting comfortable for what's going to be a long conversation. "Some people might find it hard, but it's never impossible. I think I see where you're coming from, though.

"Let's set the stage: you meet someone who you think is the guy or gal of your dreams. Like, they're the one, you're sure of it. They're so special, and they make you feel special too. Everything should be perfect, and yet..." She pauses and tilts her head up at the ceiling, staring almost solemnly at the dying light bulb twinkling above the two of you.

"... And yet, you're not feeling it. Every 'I love you' that comes out of your lips feels insincere. You can hardly bring yourself to look them in the eyes, god forbid kiss them. It's like there's something wrong, and you're pretty sure it's something wrong with you. You're broken, you think. This was supposed to be the one, there'll never be anyone else like them, and here you are, screwing it up. You feel inadequate as a lover, as a person. Finally, when things inevitably break apart, you're left wondering how you let the



opportunity of a lifetime slip out of your fingers like that, as hard as you tried.”

She looks back at you. You realize you’ve been staring dumbstruck at her the whole time she’s been talking. “Am I wrong?” her voice calls you back from the land of the dead, but you don’t answer.

“Well... Whether or not any of that’s the case, let me tell you this. As unbelievable as it sounds, love tends to be a ‘know it when you see it’ type of deal. It’s not always there from the start, though, which is why we still have to chase after it, but you just can’t blindly weed through every fish in the sea. People are complicated. It’s not your fault if things don’t work out, they usually don’t. Just don’t bullshit yourself like that.” She stumbles uneasily onto her feet and pockets her remaining share of the gas gum. Walking over to you, she offers you a hand up.

“Does that answer your question, Dovah?”

## Afterword:

We thank you sincerely for reading our humble anthology. This anthology started over 5 years ago from a series of role-playing games between I and Emi (AKA: XenoBaba). On a whim both of us began writing short story focused roleplays on the image board 4chan, in an attempt to improve peoples lives with real lessons and morals.

As all things do, those role-playing experiments ended. However I, and Emi kept the resulting short stories, and we went on to build a world from them. A world, much like ours, where we always have the present, and the future. A world of hope. In the five years since we began this project on a whim, The Rusted Boar universe has grown into a substantial, beautiful, and friendly community. We have members from around the world, who write their own short stories, art, and sometimes even music. That's not to mention how supportive they are of each-other. It's something I personally am very proud to be part of.

We of The Rusted Boar crew, from writers to artists, truly wish you all well. This series, and the resultant media made from it, mean an astonishing amount to us, and the community will always have a special place in our hearts.

Signed,

Captain Nevi Alden, of the MCS Rusted Boar

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